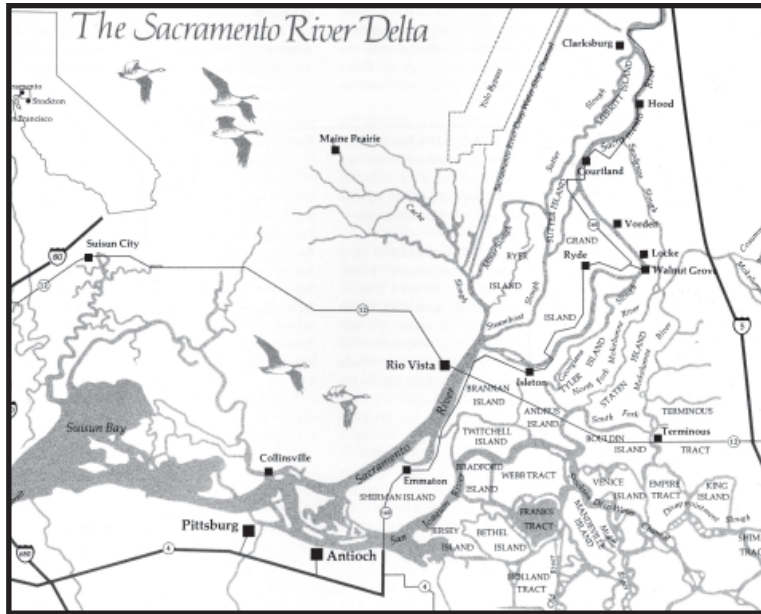


National Heritage Areas

An Option for the California Delta? - Draft Concept DELTA PROTECTION COMMISSION • JULY 2008

The Delta is a fascinating region, though unknown to many Californians. Obtaining designation as a National Heritage Area (NHA) has the potential for having significant benefits to the Delta. NHA designation is likely to increase public education about the Delta, thus building a constituency of persons interested in preserving, protecting and enhancing the Delta. NHAs promote economic development as they often lead to more people visiting the region for recreational and leisure purposes. NHA designation has the potential to preserve historical components of the Delta that are of value to the families that have lived in the region for generations and from the designation partnerships can be built to undertake projects such as ecological restoration and interpretive signage.



Source: Dillon, 1982.

What are National Heritage Areas?

A NHA is defined by the National Park Service as:

A place designated by the United States Congress where natural, cultural, historic and recreational resources combine to form a cohesive, nationally-distinctive landscape arising from patterns of human activity shaped by geography. These areas tell nationally important stories about our nation and are representative of the national experience through both the physical features that remain and the traditions that have evolved within them.

A NHA is not a unit of the National Park Service (NPS) and no land is owned or managed by the NPS. NHAs are locally managed designations that focus heritage interpretation, conservation and development

projects over a geographical matrix of public and private lands. NHAs are coordinated by local entities and the management goals are determined by local stakeholders through a comprehensive public involvement process. There are no federal land use controls implemented with the NHA designation and no federal land acquisition authority is granted in the designation process. In many existing NHAs there is widespread

support for the designation as the public understands that they give rise to partnerships which enhance the region's quality of life.

Benefits

Tangible Benefits

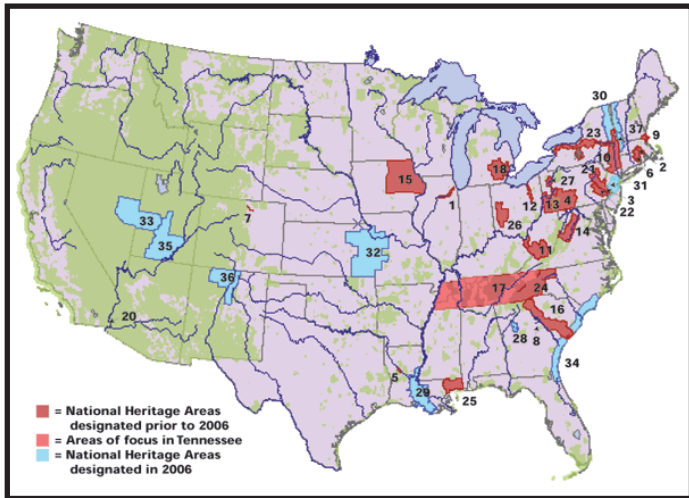
- Limited financial assistance from NPS that provides valuable "seed" money that can help with leveraging other money from state, local and private sources
- Helps to connect with other federal agencies
- Planning and interpretation assistance and expertise from NPS
- Use of NPS arrowhead symbol, thus helping with regional branding efforts



Intangible Benefits

- Helps to retain and interpret the landscape for future generations
- Protects community pride and sense of place
- Educational and inspirational opportunities that encourage residents and visitors to stay in a place
- Helps build a strong commitment to stewardship
- Offers a collaborative approach to conservation that does not compromise local control over the landscape

Other NHAs



Currently designated NHAs. Source: National Park Service

Congress has designated thirty-seven NHAs since 1984 for the purpose of recognizing and protecting places throughout the country that have exceptionally notable cultural, historical, environmental and recreational resources. As the map above shows, the vast majority of NHAs are located in the eastern portion of the U.S. and there are currently no designated NHAs in California. This page describes three existing NHAs which have benefitted in different ways.

Delaware and Lehigh - *Historic Town Revitalization*

- Historically linked Pennsylvania's anthracite coal fields with east coast cities which helped fuel the industrial revolution



- The National Heritage Corridor (NHC) is 165 miles long and was designated in 1988
- A market towns initiative was developed, which delivered technical assistance to the NHC's small towns
- Management plan outlined economic development and historic preservation as crucial to the NHC and identified a number of partners
- \$8.4 million was accumulated which went towards signage, historic rehabilitation, streetscape improvements, historic markers, brochures and more
- A heritage specialist position was created

Yuma Crossing - *Ecological Restoration*

- 22 square mile area along the lower Colorado river
- Designated in 2000
- A multi-year, \$18 to \$20 million wetland restoration project was developed for a 5 mile stretch that was clogged with invasive species and illicit activities



- \$400,000 of the NPS heritage partnership program fund was leveraged over five years to raise about \$6 million of the project costs
- Due to the high level of community involvement, stakeholders agreed to go ahead with the restoration without resolving conflicting claims of land ownership and water rights
- The project is still underway but there are already obvious signs of achievement

Silos and Smokestacks - *Regional Branding*

- A 37 county region in Iowa which tells the story of America's agricultural revolution



- The effort to obtain designation began with four or five people in Waterloo, Iowa and it received designation in 1996
- The designation helped catalyze tourism development in the region
- A network of sites, programs and events were developed in order to interpret farm life, agribusiness and rural communities - past and present
- A number of historic sites have been recognized as visitor attractions
- Farmers throughout the region have undertaken agritourism operations which has made the rural lifestyle more profitable

The Delta Protection Act

Designation as a NHA would be consistent with the Delta Protection Act (Act) which was enacted in 1992. The Act was established as the legislature found the Delta to be a natural resource of statewide, national, and international significance. Goals of the Act include, but are not limited to, the protection of the Delta's agricultural, ecological and recreational resources. The establishment of a NHA in the Delta would be consistent with these goals as partnerships can be developed which enhance agriculture, habitat and/or recreation, amongst other things.

The Process for NHA Designation

Each area needs to be authorized, starting with legislation by a local congressional representative. A suitability/feasibility study is undertaken which shows that the area is deserving of national designation. Widespread community support and involvement needs to be shown and commitment from key constituents and stakeholders needs to be demonstrated.

Suitability/Feasibility Study

The suitability/feasibility study is the document submitted to Congress in order for an area to be considered for designation as an NHA. There are a number of criteria that influence if an area is worthy of designation which should be outlined in the feasibility study:

- 1. The area has an assemblage of natural, historic, or cultural resources that together represent distinctive aspects of American heritage worthy of recognition, conservation, interpretation, and continuing use, and are best managed as such an assemblage through partnerships among public and private entities, and by combining diverse and sometimes noncontiguous resources and active communities.*
- 2. The area reflects traditions, customs, beliefs, and folk life that are a valuable part of the national story.*
- 3. The area provides outstanding opportunities to conserve natural, cultural, historic, and/or scenic features.*
- 4. The area provides outstanding recreational and educational opportunities.*
- 5. Resources that are important to the identified theme or themes of the area retain a degree of integrity capable of supporting interpretation.*
- 6. Residents, business interests, non-profit organizations, and governments within the proposed area that are involved in the planning,*

have developed a conceptual financial plan that outlines the roles for all participants including the federal government, and have demonstrated support for designation of the area.

7. The proposed management entity and units of government supporting the designation are willing to commit to working in partnership to develop the heritage area.

8. The proposal is consistent with continued economic activity in the area.

9. A conceptual boundary map is supported by the public.

10. The management entity proposed to plan and implement the project is described.



Photo Credit: Marcia McNally

Public workshops would be conducted to discuss issues such as heritage theme development and boundary delineation.

Public Involvement

Success of NHAs begins with local involvement and commitment. In order to obtain designation, it is necessary to include the public in the planning process. Including many different interest groups in the development promotes broad public support, and makes it easier to build partnerships and leverage funds for projects. A public involvement strategy should be designed when beginning the feasibility study.

The Delta Protection Commission (DPC) was created to adaptively protect, maintain, and where possible, enhance and restore the overall quality of the Delta environment consistent with the Act. The DPC has representation from a wide range of organizations and interests and its commissioners span the geography of the Delta. Having this diverse representation can therefore greatly facilitate and coordinate public outreach efforts.

An advisory group would be initially formed with a diverse membership to give direct advice to the management entity when putting together the feasibility study. Public workshops and meetings would be held in order to give community members direct opportunities to voice their perspectives on issues like theme development and boundary delineation.

Heritage Themes

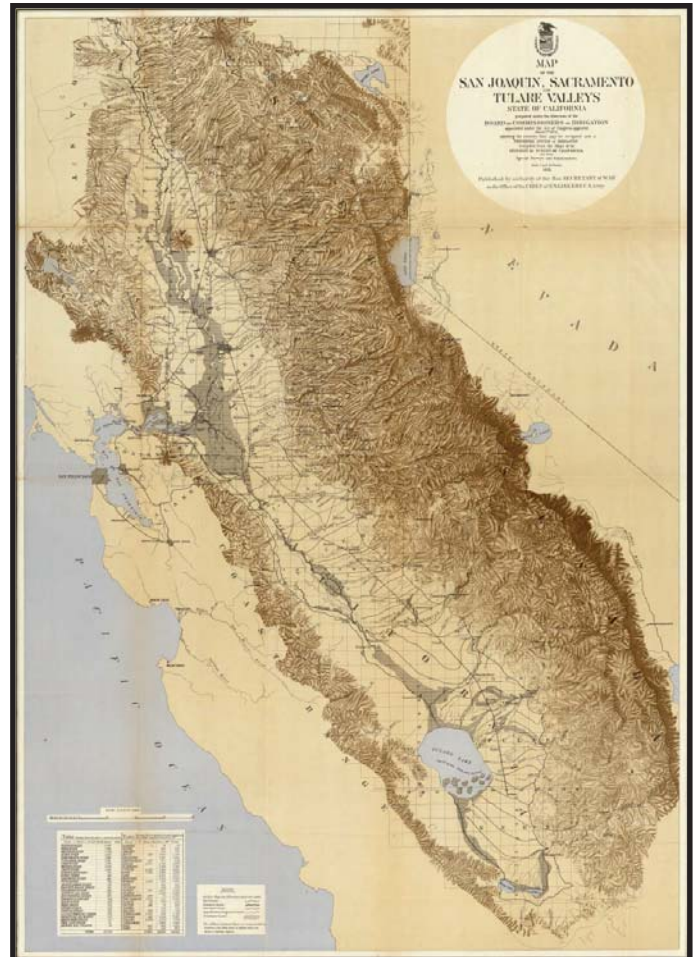
To obtain designation as a NHA, an area needs to tell nationally important stories. Thus it is necessary to think about the ways in which the Delta's natural and cultural heritage is significant on a national level. Listed below are some aspects of the Delta's heritage which are nationally significant and could be interpreted through the NHA. Ultimately it is up to the public to make decisions on which heritage themes should be incorporated into an NHA. However, the following pages explain possible themes.

How the Delta's Heritage is Nationally Significant

1. One of the only "Inverse Deltas."
2. Second largest estuary in the United States.
3. Pacific flyway stopover location.
4. Mediterranean climate, but supports anadromous fish.
5. Inland Delta in the middle of massive urbanization.
6. Provides a large amount of natural resources to California and beyond.
7. Gold rush corridor from San Francisco to Sacramento.
8. Major center for water based recreation.
9. Agricultural landscape shaped by multi-cultural rural communities.
10. Key areas of hydraulic infrastructure/engineering, comparable to the Netherlands.
11. Incredibly productive agricultural region which shipped products throughout the nation and world.
12. Innovative center for agricultural equipment invention.

Unique Landscape

The landscape of the Delta is truly one of a kind for many reasons. The Delta's watershed covers at least 40% of the state of California, as illustrated by the map below. It is one of the largest inland Deltas in the world. Often it is referred to as an 'inverse Delta' as the enclosed bay is at the mouth and the deltaic formation spreads inland. It is the largest estuary on the west coast, and the second largest estuary in the United States.



1873 map illustrating the large size of the Delta's watershed.
Source: California Irrigation Commission

Habitat and Water Resources

Historically, the Delta was a system of freshwater and brackish marshes from which spread a variety of other habitat types. Though the ecosystems of the Delta changed significantly during the reclamation era, it still remains home to over 750 plant and animal species. Millions of waterfowl use the Delta as a stopover location along the Pacific flyway. It also supports numerous fish species, including many anadromous species, which is rare for a Mediterranean climate landscape.

An especially essential resource the Delta provides is water for drinking and irrigation. Canals stem from the Delta which supply water for two-thirds of Californian residents and irrigate over seven million acres of agricultural land in California.



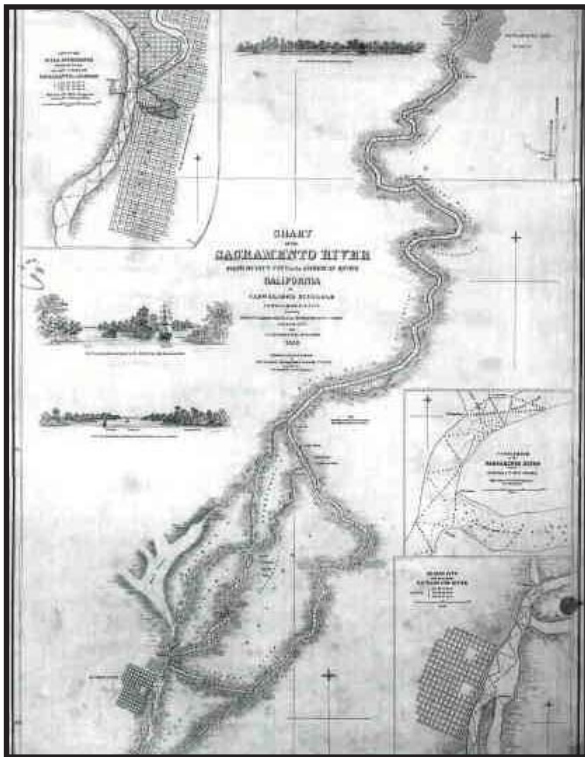
Pre-Reclamation

Native American groups that inhabited the Delta included the Wintun, Maidu and Miwok. They were most likely hunter gatherers and inhabited the higher riverbanks and natural mounds. Most of the Native Americans died of introduced diseases before the reclamation period.

The first recorded sighting of the Delta was in 1772, when Governor Fages explored the western periphery with Father Juan Crespí who described the Delta as 'a maze of islands, flat as the palm of ones hand, with channels cutting through the great tulares.' A Spaniard named Gabriel Moraga is recognized as the first person to go exploring into the heart of the Delta. There were also a few notable fur trappers in the Delta including Jedediah Smith who trapped otter, mink and beaver. Additionally the Hudson Bay trappers ventured down from Oregon into the Delta.

Gold Rush Corridor

During the Gold Rush era (1848-1855) gold miners used the Sacramento River as the primary corridor from the San Francisco Bay to the Sierra Nevadas. Thousands of people passed through the Delta and began discovering its fertile soils, which led to the reclamation era.



1850 'Chart of the Sacramento River' by Cadwalader Ringgold. Source: Houston

Water Based Recreation

Only a few years after the discovery of gold, some of the finest steamboats in America travelled the Sacramento River regularly. After the Gold Rush, steamboats continued to be used for many years for leisure purposes. Often these steamboats transported freight in addition to passengers. The Delta Queen and King were perhaps the two most famous steamboats which made daily trips along the Sacramento River from San Francisco to Sacramento.

Though steamboats are no longer used in the Delta, it is still a popular place for a number of types of water based recreation including: fishing, water skiing, swimming and sailing.



Promotional material for the Netherlands route, 1911. Source: California State Railroad Museum



The Delta Queen and King in 1939. Source: Crawford

Reclamation

In 1850, the Swamp and Overflow Land Act conveyed ownership of all swamp and overflow lands from the federal government to the State of California. Thus began the era of reclamation in which significant changes to the landscape were made. Steam powered dredges were used to collect alluvial soils from channels in order to build levees. Today there are a total of 1,100 miles of levees which makes the Delta a notable act of hydraulic infrastructure/engineering.



'Tule Breakers, pre-1900. Source: Bay Institute of San Francisco



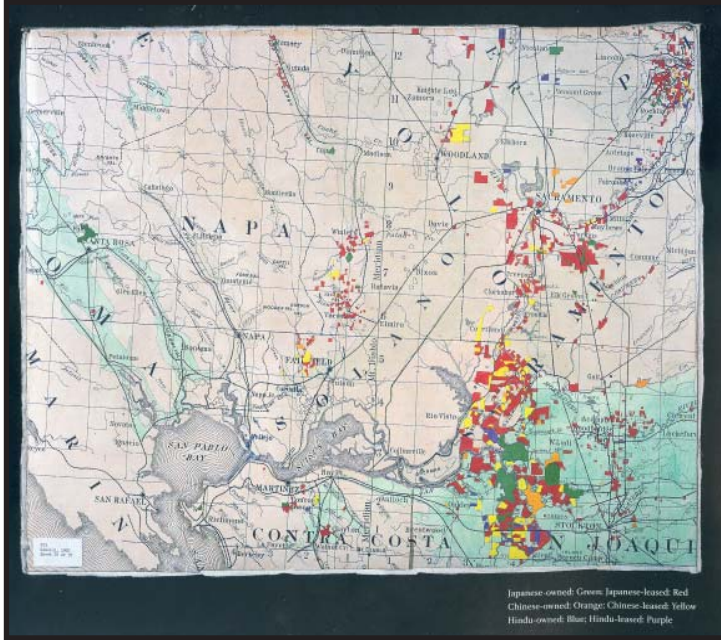
Headquarters of the Holland Land Company. Source: Yolo County Archives



Clamshell dredger constructing levees. Source: Department of Water Resources

Multicultural Rural Landscape

In order to make the Delta one of the most productive agricultural regions in California, people of many different ethnic backgrounds have worked closely together since reclamation. Chinese were involved in all aspects of farming and played a significant role in reclamation. The Delta is arguably the area that historically had the largest population of Chinese tenant farm workers in California. As a result of the high Chinese population in the Delta, a number of Chinatowns popped up along the Sacramento River, including Locke, the only town in the U.S. built exclusively by and for Chinese. A number of other immigrant and migrant groups have also had established communities in the Delta including Japanese, East Indians, Filipinos, Portuguese, Italians and Mexicans.



The 'Oriental Land Occupation' Map of 1920. The largest cluster of Asian owned or leased parcels is in the Delta. Source: Schenker

Agricultural Legacy

Due to the high fertility of Delta soils, it has been an extremely productive agricultural region since reclamation. Some of the 'trademark' Delta crops have included Bartlett Pears, asparagus, sugar beets and Irish Potatoes. Produce from the Delta has been shipped throughout the nation and world for quite some time. At one point 90% of the world's asparagus was grown in the Delta. Additionally, the Delta has been an innovative center for agricultural equipment invention. The original Caterpillar tractor was invented in the Delta which had tracks instead of wheels to avoid getting stuck in the peaty Delta soils. Other farm equipment invented in the Delta included a beet harvester, the first bean harvester and asparagus plow.



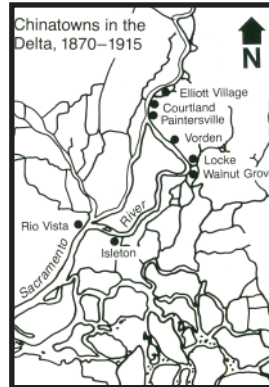
Levi Painter's farm near Courtland, ca. 1880. Source: Schenker



Chinese levee builders, dated 1896. Source: Leung



Isleton's Japantown, pre-1926. Source: Crawford



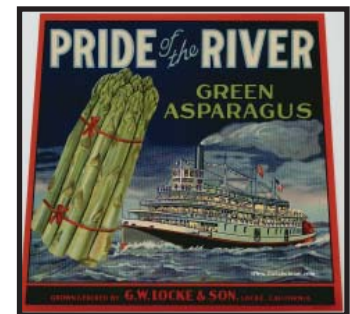
Source: Gillenkirk and Motlow



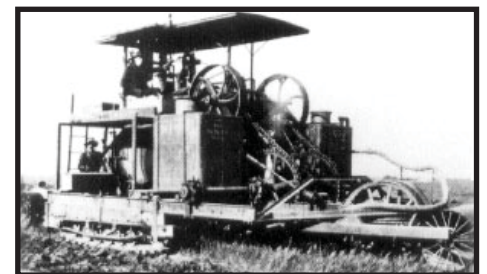
East Indian worker. Source: River Re-views Calendar



Filipino migrant worker. Source: Jensen



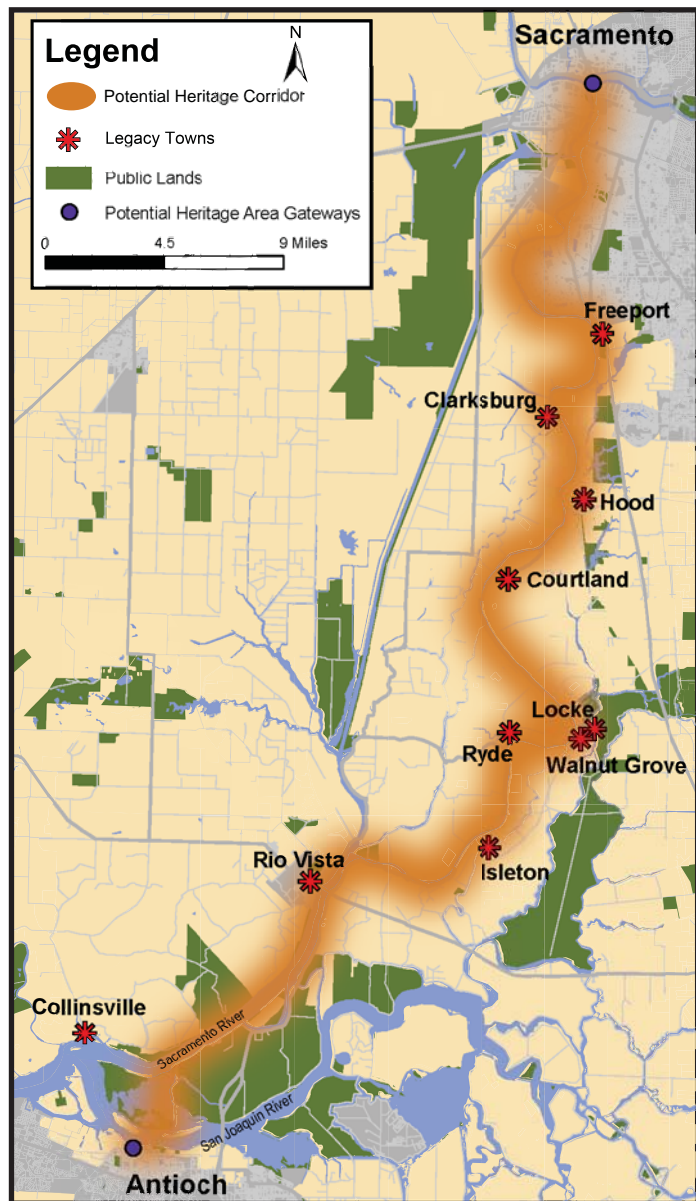
Source: www.thelabelman.com/



The original Caterpillar, 1906. Source: Holt Texas, Ltd.

NHA Boundaries

Boundaries for the NHA must be decided upon as part of the public process. However, within the boundaries there needs to be resources which support heritage themes. The Sacramento River corridor appears to be an obvious location to be included in the NHA as the legacy towns contain historic buildings which tell stories of the Delta's past. Public lands near the Sacramento and San Joaquin Rivers could also be included as those often contain wildlife habitat and recreation. Gateways could be located in the urban centers of Antioch and Sacramento in order to increase public access to the NHA.



Existing public lands and legacy towns are obvious areas to include in the NHA as they contain resources that support possible NHA themes.

Possible NHA Projects

A primary benefit of obtaining NHA designation is the development of partnerships to implement projects which are beneficial to the region. There are a number of potential projects, though the implementation is dependent on available partners and public approval.



Ecological Restoration

To increase the habitat and aesthetic components of the Delta, restoration projects can be established with willing farmers. Wildlife friendly agricultural practices can be promoted as well.

Regional Branding

A branding campaign can enhance the idea of 'Delta-as-place.' Signage can be developed throughout the region and the unique aspects of the Delta can be promoted to the public



Historic Preservation

Historic preservation can enhance and maintain historic buildings as the keepers of the Delta's stories. Adaptive reuse efforts can turn existing buildings into amenities such as restaurants, which can promote economic revitalization.



Heritage Tour Routes

Water based routes could be developed to take visitors on thematic tours and educate them about the Gold Rush, reclamation, the steamboat era, Chinese and Japanese heritage, legacy towns and more.



Agritourism and Ecotourism

Obtaining designation as an NHA is likely to increase visitors to the Delta. This would provide more opportunities for interested landowners to open up their operations to visitors for agritourism and ecotourism, resulting in economic diversification and public education.



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